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ABSTRACT

This study documents the recent history of Tuvalu, a group of nine small atolls in the western Pacific. Formerly a crown colony, Tuvalu has been independent from Great Britain since 1978. The population is approximately 8,300. Children in Tuvalu attend primary schools through grade 10. In 1986 there were 9 government primary schools with a total enrollment of more than 1,000 children. Secondary education is offered at one school (enrolling 269 students in 1981) and provided cooperatively by the government and the Tuvalu Church (London Missionary Society) to which 97% of the population belong. The study also includes a 15-item bibliography. (NL)

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EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES IN TUVALU (THE ELLICE ISLANDS)

GENERAL INFORMATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MATERIALS

Robert Sperry
Cameron University Library
Lawton, Oklahoma

January, 1989

SO 030 117

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EDUCATION IN TUVALU

GENERAL INFORMATION

Tuvalu is a scattered group of nine small atolls, extending 560 km. north to south and covering a land area of 26 sq. km. in the West Pacific. Its nearest neighbours are Fiji to the south, Kiribati to the north, and the Solomon Islands to the west. Tuvalu has been independent from Great Britain since 1978. Formerly the Ellice Islands, Tuvalu took its present name in 1975, when it separated from the Micronesian Gilbert Islands to its north (now Kiribati). The two island groups had been the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Crown Colony. Population is estimated to be 8,300, of whom 2,300 reside at the capital, Funafuti island. The nation is rapidly moving to its sustainable population ceiling of 10,000 people, or 308 persons to the square km. About 1,500 Tuvaluans work abroad, mostly on Nauru.

In August, 1987, the Tuvalu Trust Fund was established made up of $A 27 million in grants from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Recurrent budget needs are expected to be obtained by the interest in investments from this fund, about $A 2 million a year. Tuvalu's Gross National

Product was U. S. $ 4 million in 1980, or $570 per capita. The Japanese Foreign Ministry announced in August, 1988 that up to 107 million yen will be extended to Tuvalu as grants-in-aid to help the nation's projects to develop the fishing industry.

All children in Tuvalu attend primary schools through grade 10, one of which at least exists on each island. Three small primary schools are run by the Seventh-Day-Adventists. In 1986 there were nine government primary schools with a total enrolment of 1,111 children and 40 teachers. Secondary education is provided at Motufoua School on Vaitupu Island to School Certificate level. Motufoua School, which had 269 students in 1981, is jointly operated by the government and the Tuvalu Church (London Missionary Society) to which 97% of Tuvaluans belong. Eight community training centres have been established and provide basic skills training appropriate to rural life for children who fail to get a place at the secondary school but hope to find paid employment. Maths and English are taught in these centres to enable boys to qualify for entry to the Maritime Training School. In 1986 218 stu-

dents were enroled in these centres, taught by 17 teachers. Tuvalu reported that 98% of its people were literate in 1980.

A Curriculum Resources Centre, funded by the New Zealand Government, opened in September, 1987. The Asia Foundation in California donated about 3,000 books to this centre, which also contains materials from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

In 1981, 60 students were attending secondary schools and more than 100 were enroled in tertiary courses outside of Tuvalu. About a third of these students received inservice scholarships. The Maritime Training School, funded by the Australian government, operates on the Funafuti islet of Amatuku. This school trains up to 60 young men each year, primarily for posts with overseas shipping companies.

The National Library and Archives opened in 1979. A school library was built by local efforts in 1987 at Vaitupu. The University of the South Pacific has an extension centre on Funafuti with library facilities which opened in early 1988, funded under an Australian regional programme.

An inservice training programme to enable teachers to obtain the University of the South Pacific qualifications to teach English as a second language started in 1985. Recent activities by the Education Division of the Ministry of Social Services have or will include workshops on teaching English and Tuvaluan, woodworking, environmental science, maths, science, and commercial studies. Materials are being prepared for teaching these subjects.

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